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Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission of Observers in Prevlaka

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1424 (2002) of 12 July 2002, by which the Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Mission of Observers in Prevlaka (UNMOP) until 15 October 2002, and covers developments since my report of 28 June 2002 (S/2002/713).

2. UNMOP comprises 27 United Nations military observers (see annex), headed by Colonel Rodolfo Sergio Mujica (Argentina), the Chief Military Observer.

3. In accordance with its mandate, UNMOP continued to monitor the demilitarization of the Prevlaka peninsula and the neighbouring areas in Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. It conducted daily patrols throughout its area of responsibility and held periodic meetings with the local authorities in order to strengthen liaison, reduce tension, improve safety and security and promote confidence between the parties. The Chief Military Observer maintained regular contacts with the authorities in Zagreb and Belgrade. Cooperation between UNMOP and the multinational Stabilization Force (SFOR) was maintained through periodic meetings. UNMOP continued to maintain its 24-hour presence at the team site on the Ostra peninsula, at Herceg Novi, at its headquarters at Cavtat and at Gruda (see attached map).

II. Progress towards a negotiated settlement

4. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Croatia continued to address their dispute over Prevlaka through bilateral negotiations, mainly in the Interstate Diplomatic Commission. Their Ministers for Foreign Affairs also met twice recently and discussed, inter alia, the Prevlaka issue. The parties provided several briefings to the Chief Military Observer and the United Nations Secretariat on the state of the negotiations. According to the briefings, the parties are negotiating in good faith and have made significant progress on a whole range of issues aimed at normalizing the situation along their southern border, including a transitional border-crossing regime.

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III. Situation in the area of responsibility of the Mission

United Nations-controlled zone

5. The situation in the demilitarized and United Nations-controlled zones remained calm and stable. However, in continuing violation of the security regime in the United Nations-controlled zone, about nine Croatian police were usually stationed at two positions and about two Montenegrin Border Police officers were usually stationed at one position inside the zone, the exact numbers of personnel varying from day to day. The Croatian police conducted regular foot and vehicle patrols throughout the part of the zone accessible to them.

6. Also in violation of the security regime, Croatia and Montenegro continued to operate checkpoints in the United Nations-controlled zone for the purpose of implementing the crossing regime, which they had initiated at Cape Kobila in January 1999. They also continued to permit civilians, including local and foreign tourists, to enter the zone, although the numbers were substantially lower on the Montenegrin side than on the Croatian side. The waters of the zone continued to be violated daily by small fishing or pleasure craft, which entered from both the Croatian and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia sides.

7. None of these violations of the agreed security regime posed a security threat.

8. UNMOP continued its policy of consistently granting requests for authorization to visit the United Nations-controlled zone. One of the visits was by a group of 15 military attachés from UNMOP troop-contributing countries and members of the Security Council, organized at the initiative of the Croatian Ministry of Defence. Four representatives of the Ministry escorted the group into the United Nations-controlled zone. This was the first time since the inception of UNMOP that military personnel of one of the parties were admitted into the United Nations-controlled zone. As is the usual procedure, the Chief Military Observer had informed the military authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia of the visit, who raised no objections. This is a further sign of the normalization of the situation or the Prevlaka peninsula.

Demilitarized zone

9. With minor exceptions, both parties respected the demilitarized zone during the reporting period. In accordance with the agreed security regime, their police forces maintained control of the demilitarized zone.

10. UNMOP military observers continued to enjoy unrestricted freedom of movement on the Yugoslav side of the zone, but on the Croatian side the authorities did not withdraw their requirement that UNMOP provide advance written notice before undertaking foot or vehicle patrols in the northern region.

11. A commercial demining company conducted limited mine clearance in the northern part of the Croatian part of the demilitarized zone.

IV. Financial aspects

12. Although an independent mission, UNMOP draws its administrative and budgetary support from the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH). By its resolution 56/505 of 27 June 2002, the General Assembly appropriated an amount of $78.5 million gross for the maintenance and liquidation of UNMIBH during the period from 1 July 2002 to 30 June 2003. Therefore, should the Security Council decide to extend the mandate of UNMOP beyond 15 October 2002, as recommended in paragraph 13 below, the costs of maintaining the Mission would be met from within the budget for UNMIBH. The mandate of UNMIBH will expire on 31 December 2002. UNMIBH administration will continue to provide support to UNMOP as required during the liquidation period from 1 January 2003 to 30 June 2003.

V. Observations

13. I am encouraged by the commitment of the parties to resolve their dispute over Prevlaka through meetings of the Interstate Diplomatic Commission and its subordinate bodies and by other bilateral means. It is apparent from the briefings given to the Chief Military Observer and the Secretariat that the parties are working in good faith with a determination to reach an interim agreement aimed at normalizing the situation on the ground at the earliest. It is also evident that they share a common approach on key aspects of such an agreement. I am convinced that the parties will be able, in the near future, to narrow their remaining differences to the point where the presence of UNMOP is no longer needed. In view of this, and given that the area of responsibility of UNMOP has remained calm and stable for a long period of time, I recommend that the Security Council extend the mandate of UNMOP for a period of two months, until 15 December 2002, without change to the concept of operations and with the Mission preparing for its withdrawal to commence thereafter and to be completed by 31 December 2002. Should the parties reach an agreement before 15 December 2002, I will revert to the Security Council without delay with a view to shortening this time frame.

14. It is my assessment that the closure of another chapter in the tumultuous recent history of the Balkans is within reach, and that Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia are about to take another step towards normal, good-neighbourly relations. The men and women of UNMOP have contributed to making this possible and I would like to commend them and the Chief Military Observer for their perseverance in the efforts to maintain peace and security in their area of responsibility.

Annex

Composition and strength of the military element of the United Nations Mission of Observers in Prevlaka as at 1 October 2002

Nationality	*Number of military observers*
Argentina	2[a]
Bangladesh	1
Belgium	1
Brazil	2
Czech Republic	1
Denmark	1
Egypt	1
Finland	1
Ghana	1
Indonesia	2
Ireland	2
Jordan	1
Kenya	1
Nepal	1
New Zealand	1
Nigeria	1
Norway	1
Pakistan	1
Poland	1
Russian Federation	1
Switzerland	1
Ukraine	2
Total	**27**

[a] Includes Chief Military Observer.

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